

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

Claim 1 (currently amended): An inventory agent for a component audit and inventory management system, the inventory agent comprising executable code for implementing:

a receiver, on a target device, including means for receiving an inventory-commence message from a client computer over a data network in response to a request from the client computer to a host unit for accessing hardware and software inventory data on the target device, said inventory-commence message being generated by the host unit, said target device being remote with respect to and not connected to the client computer, said target device being only intermittently accessible to the data network;

a detector, on the target device, including means for collecting the hardware and software inventory data relating to hardware and software installed on the target device in response to commands included in the inventory-commence message; and

a transmitter including means for transmitting from the target device to [[a]] the host unit of the component audit and inventory management system, through the data network, an inventory data message including the inventory data associated with the target device, wherein the client computer accesses the host unit for accessing the hardware and software inventory data of the target device.

Claim 2 (previously presented): An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the receiver includes means for comparing the identity of the inventory-commence message with the identity of the inventory agent.

Claim 3 (previously presented): An inventory agent as claimed in claim 2, wherein the inventory agent includes means for terminating the inventory data collection if the identity of the inventory-commence message is not associated with the identity of the inventory agent.

Claim 4 (previously presented): An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the inventory-commence message is an electronic mail message retrievable by the target device when it connects to the data network.

Claim 5 (previously presented): An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the inventory-commence message receipt, inventory data collection, and inventory data message transmission are transparent to a user of the target device.

Claim 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (previously presented): An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the collected inventory data is saved directly to a file in executable language statements for incorporation into a database.

Claim 8 (previously presented): An inventory agent as claimed in claim 7, wherein the executable language statements include Structured Query Language (SQL) statements.

Claims 9-32 (canceled).

Claim 33 (withdrawn): A component audit and inventory management system comprising:

- a plurality of target devices, said each of the plurality of target devices having software and hardware installed thereon;
- a host unit, resident in a host computer;
- the host computer comprising a processor, memory, and user interface; and
- a host message handling system operatively connected to the host unit and accessible to a data network;

the host unit including:

- means for receiving a request-inventory message from a client computer via the host message handling system;

means for generating an inventory-commence message in response to the request-inventory message, and for forwarding the inventory-commence message to the client computer via the host message handling system;

means for receiving hardware and software inventory data associated with the hardware and software installed on each of the plurality of the target devices associated with the client computer and collected electronically from each of the target devices, the inventory data having been collected by an inventory agent installed on each of the target devices and activated by the inventory-commence message; and

means for aggregating inventory data from the plurality of target devices associated with the client computer.

Claim 34 (canceled).

Claim 35 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 33, wherein the inventory-commence message comprises:

an identifier including means for verifying the identity of the inventory agent installed on the target device; and

a trigger including means for causing the inventory agent to commence collecting inventory data from the target device.

Claim 36 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 35, wherein the inventory-commence message further includes an install-catalyst means including means for initiating download of a new inventory agent from the host unit if the identifier fails to verify the identity of the inventory agent.

Claim 37 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 35, wherein the inventory-commence message further includes a sequential pulse number.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 33, wherein the inventory agent is resident on each of the target devices as a software agent and comprises executable code for implementing:

a receiver, on each of the target devices, including means for receiving an inventory-commence message from the client computer over the data network;

a detector including means for collecting hardware and software inventory data associated with each of the target devices in response to the inventory-commence message; and

a transmitter including means for transmitting from each of the target devices to the host unit, via the data network, an inventory data message including the inventory data associated with the target device.

Claim 39 (withdrawn) The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the receiver includes means for comparing the identity of the inventory-commence message with the identity of the inventory agent.

Claim 40 (withdrawn) The inventory management system of claim 39, wherein the inventory agent includes means for terminating the inventory data collection if the identity of the inventory-commence message is not associated with the identity of the inventory agent.

Claim 41 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the inventory-commence message is an electronic mail message retrievable by the target device when it connects to the data network.

Claim 42 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the inventory-commence message receipt, inventory data collection, and inventory data message transmission are invisible to a user of the target device.

Claim 43 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the collected inventory data is saved directly to a file in executable language statements for incorporation into a database associated with the host unit.

Claim 44 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the executable language statements include Structured Query Language (SQL) statements.

Claim 45 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 43, wherein the host unit includes means for interpreting the executable language statements as command line statements.

Claim 46 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 33, further including means for forwarding the aggregated inventory data to the client via the host message handling system.

Claim 47 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 33, further including a migration analysis engine.

Claim 48 (withdrawn): The inventory management system of claim 33, further including a replacement analysis engine.